

LEGISLATIVE BILL 689

Approved by the Governor May 31, 2005

Introduced by Stuhr, 24; Raikes, 25

AN ACT relating to schools; to create and provide duties for the Distance Education Enhancement Task Force; to provide for termination; and to declare an emergency.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. The Distance Education Enhancement Task Force is created. Members of the task force shall be appointed on or before June 15, 2005, and shall include:

(1) The chairperson and one other member of the Education Committee of the Legislature;

(2) The chairperson of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Legislature;

(3) The chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature;

(4) One representative of educational service units;

(5) One representative of distance education consortia;

(6) One representative of the State Department of Education who has expertise in technology infrastructure;

(7) One representative of the Public Service Commission;

(8) Two representatives of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission;

(9) Two representatives of postsecondary education who have expertise in technology infrastructure, distance education, or dual-enrollment courses;

(10) One representative of the Governor;

(11) Two members who are either school district superintendents or public school principals; and

(12) One representative of the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission who has expertise in technology infrastructure or distance education.

The members listed in subdivisions (1), (4), (5), (6), (7), (9), (11), and (12) of this section shall be appointed by the Executive Board of the Legislative Council. The members listed in subdivisions (8) and (10) of this section shall be appointed by the Governor.

The chairperson of the Education Committee of the Legislature shall be the chairperson of the task force and shall call the initial and subsequent meetings of the task force. Members of the task force shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out their duties as members of the task force as provided in sections 81-1174 to 81-1177. The Education Committee of the Legislature, the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Legislature, the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, the State Department of Education, and the Nebraska Information Technology Commission shall provide research and administrative support for the task force. For budgetary purposes only, the task force shall be within the Legislative Council.

The task force shall terminate on December 31, 2005.

Sec. 2. The Distance Education Enhancement Task Force shall develop an improvement plan to upgrade and coordinate distance education in Nebraska. The task force shall make recommendations for policies and potential legislation to the Clerk of the Legislature, the Education Committee of the Legislature, the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Legislature, and the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2005. The plan shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) The development of a high capacity, scalable telecommunications infrastructure;

(2) The development of an Internet protocol-based network to interconnect all existing and future distance education and videoconferencing facilities;

(3) Upgrades of current telecommunications equipment;

(4) Training and support programs for educators in the development and use of distance learning;

(5) The transfer of distance education coordination responsibilities from distance education consortia to educational service units on or before July 1, 2007;

(6) Statewide coordination for distance education offerings;

- (7) Potential funding sources;
- (8) The establishment of an equitable and affordable financing system for both equipment and usage;
- (9) The establishment of a system that allows school districts to purchase quality distance education offerings from other school districts either directly or with educational service units acting as fiscal agents; and
- (10) Statewide provision of other technology-based services.

The task force may hold one or more public hearings to obtain public input.

Sec. 3. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.